



**Testimony Submitted to the Planning and Development Committee
in Opposition to:
House Bill 6629 - An Act Concerning Regionalism in Connecticut**

*Submitted by Peter Dorpalen, Executive Director
Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley*

The Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley (COGCV) consists of the mayors and first selectmen of the thirteen municipalities in the greater Waterbury area. On behalf of the Council, I am speaking in opposition to House Bill 6629: an Act Concerning Regionalism in Connecticut.

The bill eliminates existing regional planning boundaries and establishes new regions based on county boundaries. The Central Naugatuck Valley Region ends up split between Litchfield and New Haven Counties, with Waterbury straddling the county line. The new boundaries do not reflect the social and economic ties in the greater Waterbury area – the key factor in establishing the original regional planning boundaries. Using county boundaries, the focus of the new region is likely to be New Haven at the expense of Waterbury and surrounding towns that constitute the CNVR. The bill also pre-empts the legislature's approved study of logical regional boundaries.

Splitting the towns in the greater Waterbury area by county line would be devastating to the area. The City of Waterbury, coupled with Naugatuck in New Haven County, and Watertown in Litchfield County, is the regional center of the Central Naugatuck Valley region. The highway network radiates outward from Waterbury. The region's municipalities are all part of the I-84 corridor. CT-Transit bus routes radiate outward from Waterbury, including routes into Watertown in Litchfield County. The regional minibus service, based in Waterbury, serves Watertown and Thomaston in Litchfield County. The area's retail center is Waterbury. The two hospitals in Waterbury serve the region, and the local newspaper covers the Waterbury metropolitan area and Litchfield County.

The region has a long history of working together, and has demonstrated its capability to initiate and deliver a variety of services:

- On-going regional hazardous waste collection program
- Operation of a regional minibus service for the disabled and the formation of a regional transit district
- Elderly nutrition program including meals-on-wheels
- Police mobile data communications
- Municipal GIS parcel mapping
- Regional approach to municipal solid waste and recycling, with transfer stations established in Watertown

COGCNV has undertaken a whole host of planning studies that have led to funding and implementation of projects and to better government:

- Regional plan of conservation and development – first in the United States under the HUD comprehensive planning program
- Congested highway studies – implementation of intersection improvements; placed I-84 in the forefront to beginning necessary state studies to implement upgrades
- Planning and zoning training seminars

The proposed New Haven and Litchfield COGs would marginalize the Waterbury region and disregard over fifty years of regional planning, cooperation and partnership. The Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley, and its predecessor the Central Naugatuck Valley Regional Planning Agency, have fostered relationships and a regional spirit that will be lost. A future New Haven COG would be dominated by New Haven and would struggle to provide the same level of assistance to Waterbury as the city addresses its unique challenges. Watertown would be in a Litchfield COG, and it would no longer be part of a metropolitan planning organization with access to highway funding from the Waterbury urban allocation.

Instead of this legislation, let the OPM regional boundary study, authorized by the General Assembly, move forward.